

Merchant and Nuuanu Streets --  
Stangenwald Building  
115 Merchant Street  
Honolulu  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-55 F

HABS  
HI,  
2-HONLU,  
18-F-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013

HABS  
HI,  
2-HONOLU,  
1B-F-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MERCHANT AND NUUANU STREETS COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS  
STANGENWALD BUILDING

HABS No. HI-55 F

Location: 115 Merchant Street, City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii.  
Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 13, Tax Key #5.

Present Owner: Robert Jones Investments, Ltd.  
New Zealand

Present Occupant: Multiple retail and office space.

Significance: At six stories, the Stangenwald building was considered Hawaii's first skyscraper and one of the most prestigious addresses in Honolulu. It was functionally progressive, and its Beaux Arts classical style expressed the prominence sought by its developers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1901. Construction began on the Stangenwald building in 1900 and was completed in April of 1901. [Thomas Thrum's Annual, 1901.]
2. Architect: Charles William Dickey. [See Bishop Estate report, HABS No. HI-55 H.]
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1901	The Pacific Building Company
1935	sold to Charles Brewer Estate
1962	sold to Wilcox Development Co.
1981	sold to Merchant Street Associates
1985	sold to Robert Jones Investments, Ltd.

[Tax Records, Building Permits, Historic Hawaii News, 7/8-1981, and Pacific Building News, 8-19-1985.]
4. Original plans and construction: The Stangenwald Building was a six-story steel frame and brick building. It had an elevator and stairway in the center core of the building. The sixth-floor facade was marked by a deep balcony, and a heavy cornice which incorporated pediments over the windows. [Photographs.]

5. Alterations and additions: The cornice was removed after 1912; the date of this alteration has not been determined. Minor office space alterations are documented between 1954 and 1978. The sixth-floor balcony was removed and the brick sides were plastered. [Building Permits and Wilcox.] In 1980 the architecture firm of James Tsugawa, AIA & Associates, Inc., renovated the building. [Historic Hawaii News, 7/8-1981.]

b. Historical Context:

Dr. Hugo Stangenwald, the "student revolutionist, Austrian emigre, able practicing physician, and recognized early-day daguerreotype artist," left Austria in March 1845. After living in California, he arrived in Honolulu in 1853. He married the former Mary Dimond in 1854. [Scott; David Free, "The House That Hugo Built," Pacific Building News, 2-16-1981.] He opened a shop in late 1854 in a one-story frame structure on the site of the present Stangenwald building. His advertisement was well-known:

"To send to them that precious boon,  
And have your picture taken soon,  
And quick their weeping eyes they'll wipe  
To smile upon your daguerreotype."  
[Scott.]

Stangenwald bought the Merchant Street property in 1869 for \$950 and formed a partnership with his fellow-physician neighbor, Dr. Judd. In January, 1899, Stangenwald leased his property to a hui, a limited partnership firm which was to lease his property from him and erect a building there, under his supervision. The structure was to be a monument to himself. He died in June of that year. The hui sold its interest in the land for \$18,000 to the Pacific Building Company, newly formed to finance the project. The year-old Samuel N. Castle Estate Limited became the chief financier. The building's earliest occupants were to be lawyers, many of whom were in the hui and so had a vested interest in the building, so that early conceptions of the building included a law library and a Business Men's Club, though neither were realized in the final building. Its height, too, seems, to have been altered several times in the course of its construction, ending with the present six-story structure. [Pacific Commercial Advertiser, 9-21-1900, p.6; Wilcox.]

The Stangenwald Building's steel frame supported a decorative structure, "with dark terra cotta and pressed metal trimmings and cornice, massive in design yet promising a pleasing effect. This building is of the most modern style of fire-proof architecture, designed with completeness of office conveniences equal to that of any city." Indeed, Honolulu's business community seemed to agree,

for its prestigious address was claimed by several of Honolulu's most prominent company names: The Henry Waterhouse Trust Company, the B. F. Dillingham and Castle and Cooke Companies, shippers, and the Alexander & Baldwin and C. Brewer Companies, commission merchants and agents. The Stangenwald Building remained the tallest structure in Honolulu until 1950, when the seven-story Edgewater Hotel in Waikiki usurped that title. [Thrum's Annual, 1901, p.171, Telephone Directories with Classified Business Directories, and Pacific Business News, 8-19-1985.]

Report prepared by Laura S. Alderman, Project Historian.

For background information on this downtown neighborhood, see HABS No. HI-55.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An impressive six-story, five-bay office building with concentrations of terra cotta work. Its symmetrical facade is dominated by vertical alignment of openings. The center three bays, having semicircular openings at the fifth-floor level, are flanked by more solid end bays. The sixth floor, while altered in detail, retains its original rhythm of openings. The facade has a 2:3:1 vertical composition.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in excellent condition as a result of major rehabilitation in 1980.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The five-bay facade measures 78'-10" along Merchant Street and about 66' deep and approximately 85' high.
2. Foundations: Masonry and concrete.
3. Walls: The exposed brick walls are painted. In composition the brickwork resembles ashlar and quoin work through its projections and recesses. There is extensive decorative terra cotta work. The ground floor provides the visual base of the building and is penetrated with retail display windows. The second floor is linked visually with the first floor. Levels three through five are treated as a unit with the fifth-floor windows of the center three bays being arched. The end bays are more solid and have smaller window openings. The sixth floor is treated as a veranda. The decorative details of the sixth floor have been removed.

4. Structural system, framing: There is a steel frame with masonry bearing walls and concrete floor system.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The first-floor window openings are sheltered by fixed, canvas awnings. The entry doorway has a projecting copper canopy (from 1980 rehabilitation). A projecting balcony with an iron railing is centered on the facade at the third-floor level. This balcony provides access to the symmetrically positioned flagpoles projecting from the building. The sixth floor has a recessed veranda across the entire front. This portion of the building has undergone the most extensive change.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The building's entrance, centered on the main facade, is slightly recessed and contains double doors with plate glass in bronze-over-wood frame doors flanked by side lights. This one entry provides access to the retail shops as well as the offices above.
  - b. Windows: The first-floor storefronts have fixed-glass windows; small panes surround a large pane. These windows date from the 1980 rehabilitation. In the upper stories, the end bays have single one-over-one-light double-hung wood sash windows. In the three center bays of the second through fourth floor there are triple one-over-one-light double-hung wood sash windows. At the fifth floor the arched openings contain one-over-one-light double-hung wood sash windows flanked by rectangular single pane casements. The casements are partially hidden by the arch form. The sixth floor has wood one-over-one-light double-hung sash. The left end opening has French doors to provide access to the veranda.
7. Roof: There is a flat roof, sloped slightly for drainage. It has rolled composition roofing. The roof is surrounded by a parapet.

C. Description of Interior

The interior has undergone rehabilitation. The ground-floor lobby has a floor penetration to the basement level. To the rear of the lobby is the elevator and stairway core to the upper levels. The ground floor has retail shops. The upper levels have an interior hallway with offices. Major partitions and openings have been retained as have some of the original moldings and materials. Otherwise the building has been updated.

D. Site:

The building sits mid-block on the makai side of Merchant Street in the Merchant Street National Register district. It is contiguous to the five-story Judd building to the right (Ewa direction). In the Diamond Head direction (left) is a narrow pedestrian passage and a small two-story building. Behind the building (makai direction) is a parking lot for the C. Brewer building. The context is one of modern tall office buildings except for the historic buildings nearby. The building occupies its entire lot. There is no setback or landscaping.

In this description, local designation is given for orientation. "Mauka" means mountain direction, "Makai" means sea direction, "Diamond Head" means in the direction of Diamond Head crater, "Ewa" means in the direction of the town of Ewa (opposite Diamond Head direction).

Report prepared by Robert C. Giebner, Project Supervisor.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

From the Bishop Museum Photograph Collection:

Files: "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. pre-1900", "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. 1900-".

Baker, Ray Jerome. A Catalogue of Maui and Other Hawaiian Scenes for the Most Part Taken Between 1910-1915. Book 2, #DEM 25783.

B. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Hawaii Directories, 1901-present. Hawaii State Archives and Bishop Museum Library.

Telephone Directories, 1930-36. Bishop Museum Library.

Maps: B. F. Dillingham Fire Insurance Company for Board of Fire Insurance Underwriters of Honolulu, 1900, and 1906 corrected to 1911. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Tax Records, Tax Assessor's office, 842 Bethel Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Records for "Zone 1, Sec. 1, Plat 13, #5".

Building Permits, Municipal Building, Honolulu, Hawaii. #'s 103591, 76270, 105025, 86890, 35275, 23404, 8127, 190737, 169074, 132205, 114699.

C. Secondary and Published Sources:

Pacific Commercial Advertiser

1-2-1897, p.1  
9-21-1900, p.6  
1-1-1901, p.26

Historic Hawaii News

5-1979  
11-1980  
2-1981  
7/8-1981

Pacific Building News

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Merrill, William Dickey. "Charles William Dickey, Architect." Hawaii Architect 1-1979, p.12.

Scott, Edward B. Saga of the Sandwich Islands, vol. I. Crystal Bay, Lake Tahoe, Nev.: The Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1968.

Thrum, Thomas. Hawaiian Almanac and Annual. Honolulu: Black & Auld Printers, 1900, p.161; 1901, p.171; 1902, p.145.

Wilcox, Gaylord. "Business and Buildings: Downtown Honolulu's Old Fashioned Block." The Hawaiian Journal of History vol. 6, 1972.

The Architecture of C. W. Dickey: Evolution of a Hawaiian Style.  
State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Historic Sites Inventory, 1984.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by First American Title Co., Historic Hawaii Foundation, and the National Park Service. Recorded under the direction of Kenneth L. Anderson, Chief of HABS, and Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, the project was completed during the summer of 1987 at the Honolulu field office. Project supervisor was Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona); project historian was Laura S. Alderman (Washington, D.C.); architectural foreman was J. Scott Anderson (Washington, D.C.); and architectural technicians were Coy E. Burney (University of Maryland), Kenneth R. Imoehl (University of Arizona), and Michel A. van Ackere (Brown University).

ADDENDUM TO:  
MERCHANT & NUUANU STREETS, STANGENWALD BUILDING  
(Stangenwald Building)  
115 Merchant Street  
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HABS HI-55-F  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
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